New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1957

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM & THE SUN
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES

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"Nude With Violin"

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

November 15, 1957

Coward Jabs At Art Fakers

By FRANK ASTON.

Noel Coward knows how to needle us, how to make it sting without really hurting. And he understands that we realize, if we're honest, that certain portions of our social anatomy deserve a sharp jab or two.

His "Nude With Violin," which opened at the Belasco last evening, allows him to spoof our common phoniness in the world of art. He implies that if all our writers had to learn spelling, our composers to find where middle C belongs and our painters to grasp simple composition, hundreds of thousands of fakes all over the world would lose their soft jobs.

"Nude With Violin" is a none-too-sturdy farce in which the survivors of a recently deceased painter try to ascertain if there's anything to inherit. It seems there may not be because people keep coming in with papers to indicate the master didn't actually do all those canvases which he signed and sold to experts who professed to mystical means of recognizing his true genius. A scandal fit to shatter the whole world of art threatens for three acts, but Mr. Coward doesn't let things come to that.

Instead, he sticks to humor which rises at times to satire and is at all times substantial enough to keep an audience in an almost constant chuckle. Mr. Coward hasn't a world-buster, but what he does have is thoroughly civilized and should appeal to people who try to exercise some taste in their daily affairs.

Mr. Coward, who wrote and directed the piece, plays the lead, appearing as the cynical valet of the painter. He wears a mourning band, a pair of devil's eyebrows, a mocking grin, and an amazing wig which is touched with lugubrious gray and is suggestive of the butch-clip. He has himself a high time from start to finish.

His supporting players are extraordinarily goodlooking and thoroughly able. For the most part they work for broad laughs. Conspicuous among them are Morris Carnovsky as the shaken art expert, Luba Malina as a loud-mouthed Russian, William Traylor as a knuckleheaded reporter from an American magazine, and Mona Washbourne as a lady who frankly likes love.

Oliver Smith has provided a handsome set to suggest a Paris studio. The play's title, by the way, is the name of a painting that figures in the plot.

"NUDE WITH VIOLIN"

Comedy in three acts and five scenes by Noel Coward; staged by Mr. Coward; scenery by Oliver Smith; costumes by Frank Thompson; lighting by Peggy Clark; presented by the Playwrights Company, Lance Hamilton and Charles Russell at the Belasco Theatre, November 14, 1957. The cast:

Sebastien.....Noel Coward
Marie-Celeste...Therese Quadri
Clinton Preminger Jr.....
William Traylor
Isobel Sorodin.....Joyce Carey
Jane.....Angela Thornton
Colin.....John Ainsworth
Pamela.....Iola Lynn
Jacob Friedland.....
Morris Carnovsky
Anya Pavlikov.....Luba Malina
Cherry-May Waterton.....
Mona Washbourne
Fabrice.....Robert Thurston
Obadiah Lewellyn..Cory Devlin
George.....Robert Wark
Lauderdale.....Bobby Alford

New York Herald Tribune

November 15, 1957

FIRST NIGHT REPORT
WALTER KERR'S REVIEW

'Nude With Violin'

IT IS delightful to have Mr. Noel Coward back in the theater. It would be even more delightful to have him back in a play.

What he has really brought us, after a considerable sojourn in the Bahamas and elsewhere, is a fascinating new makeup calculated to keep us from recognizing him in the Sunday papers, and a fistful of cocktail-hour quips calculated to make us identify him the minute he opens his precise, slightly pained, imperturbable mouth.

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The makeup consists of severely taped eyelids and a slightly silvered crew-cut that turn him at once into a sort of Madison Avenue Buddha. Since Mr. Coward is playing a scoundrelly manservant of outrageously mixed parentage, a fellow who can smile and smile and never be a villain, the image is gently appropriate. Sakini may be said to ride again.

The quips consist of assorted references to "art students of all three sexes," the painter he once tucked into bed "with a friend of his," and a pianist who became a part-time pickpocket in order to keep his fingers supple. While the master entertainer is discussing a man who loathed ballet because of the swans ("There are ballets without swans." "Very few"), the going is very nice indeed. Canape-stuff, but nice.

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Unfortunately, a good bit of the time Mr. Coward is simply emulating his pianist. "Nude With Violin" is part-time work, the finger-exercises of a gentleman whose muse has just gone down to the beach. And Mr. Coward is very, very busy—in a gentlemanly way—picking his own pocket.

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Here are the suave entrances, immaculately arranged. The doors of Oliver Smith's elegant and sunshiny setting open again and again to admit, on slippered feet, the rascal who has been listening steadily to every quarrelsome word said and is now prepared, in the glossiest of tones, to blackmail everyone in sight. (His master, just deceased, has never painted any of the pictures on which his international fame rests.)

Here, too, are the telephone conversations: in delectable French, in salt-and-peppered German, in what may just possibly have been Japanese. Add two extremely jolly sequences in which the star permits himself to be interviewed by a tousled reporter from "Life" magazine—Mr. Coward snaps to a soulful salute at the thought of a cover in full color—and we have the sauce that Mr. Coward has served, and been served by, so gaily before.

• • •

But what of the times when an extremely pretty ingenue named Angela Thornton must—without the author's own blithe confidence in his briskest chitchat—stride across stage and engage loudly and firmly in repartee like "What would a woman of that sort do with a chicken farm?" "Presumably what other people do with chicken farms—raise chickens!" The other players—the highly skilled Joyce Carey, Luba Malina, Morris Carnovsky, and Mona Washbourne among them—cannot duplicate their author's bonhomie, or his occasional blockbusters.

And what are we to make of a plot, however insouciant it may be, that begins by disclosing one letter as proof of forgery, moves on to another letter disclosing same, and goes its insufficiently merry way disclosing still others?

The mood of the evening is festive, the communal manners are impeccable. But the jest winds down a whisper.

DAILY NEWS

November 15, 1957

Coward's 'Nude With Violin' Has Comic Style but Is a Slight Jest

By JOHN CHAPMAN

In "Nude With Violin," which the Playwrights' Company presented at the Belasco last evening, there are fine, cheerful moments whenever Noel Coward, the author, turns a phrase, or Noel Coward, the actor, turns a gesture. It has been more than 20 years since Coward appeared on a local stage. He has been missed in all of these years, for he has an inborn style and an outgoing goodwill which are highly valued in our theatre. His return should be a triumph—a deft and elegant work of sophistication—but last evening it was something less than a knockout.

As author, Coward disarms his audience as best he can by calling "Nude With Violin" a light comedy. As actor, he beguiles his audience with his amazing facility, grace and sureness before the footlights. But, disarmed and beguiled as I was, I feel that the comedy is too light to be called merely light. It also has the misfortune to follow by a couple of seasons Harry Kurnitz's lampoon of the art racket, "Reclining Figure."

Was He a Fake?

"Nude With Violin" involves itself with the estate of a great modern painter named Sorodin, lately deceased. Coward was his manservant and knew him best. He knew him in all his "periods" of painting, and only he knows if the artist was a fake. Several men and women appear, knowing that the estate is a large one, to try a little blackmail. Each one hints that he possesses a document which will expose the great man as a painter who never painted at all. Others, it is suggested, did his work for him, and an odious little boy of 12—Coward's son—lays claim to having achieved the master's final masterpiece, Nude With Violin.

These events should be jollier and more cynical than they are. Things pick up on the stage only when Coward, as a deferential servant who knows he is better than his betters, is making a small rearrangement of the plot or answering the telephone in English, French, German, Russian, Chinese and maybe a couple of other languages. He should be put in charge of inquiring "Who's calling?" on the United Nations switchboard.

Able and Handsome

There are some able actors in "Nude With Violin," including Morris Carnovsky, Joyce Carey, Iola Lynn, Mona Washbourne and Luba Malina. There is a handsome setting by Oliver Smith of an artist's studio in Paris. There is, indeed, a fine air of elegance in the production.

But "Nude With Violin," besides being the light comedy the author calls it, is a slight jest. Its greatest service is in bringing Coward back to our stage—and this charming man will never be unwelcome.

Journal-American

November 15, 1957

Playwright Noel Fails the Actor

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE tote registered in this theatrical handbook regarding "Nude With Violin," which opened at the Belasco Theatre last night, unhappily shows a loss. This does not mean the persons involved in this Noel Coward operation will be deprived of their loot; it means, simply, that it should have been better, and that on any basis of artistic appraisal it is no tribute to the gifted gentleman who wrote it, directed it, and took the starring role.

Mr. Coward has here assayed to spoof the world of the art connoisseurs. The gentleman's gentleman of a deceased painter receives the estranged family of the artisan and it soon develops that the fortune in canvasses, spread expensively throughout the world, are the products of alien hands. There follows a series of vignettes in which each stand-in is bought off.

Mr. Coward is, of course, the inscrutable butler, a master of innumerable languages and the absolute monarch of the squares who confront him.

Luba Shines

This is where he began to lose me.

He has a perfectly preposterous correspondent from "Time and Life," a young man of abysmal naivete, who would have had the corporation bankrupt within a working week. He also has a cardboard portrait of a cockney lady and her ridiculous Latin lover that would flush a blush from the cheek of Jayne Mansfield. On the plus side it must be admitted that Luba Malina, however broadly portrayed as the Russian decoy of the departed artist, gives a brilliant and highly humorous performance.

These are segregated music hall bits; his story lacks cohesion and purpose. There are the isolated lines that bear the Coward charm — there are others that are nearly embarrassing. "Call me Clint," the correspondent says to the butler. "All my pals do . . . So long, Pal." Noel knows better than that.

In the role of the mysterious servant he has a high, good time—having given himself none the worst of the dialogue. He enters and exits with abandon, and I would be the last to admit that he cannot roll a brittle line off the end of his tongue, or dominate the premises with that air of luxuriance and grace which has, for him, become a career.

No Pretention

With him are a fine assortment of experts: Morris Carnovsky, as the art dealer; Joyce Carey, as the artist's widow; Angela Thornton, John Ainsworth and Iola Lynn, as members of the family of the deceased, and the pre-mentioned Luba Malina.

Oliver Smith has designed a workable set and the author-star has moved his minions about with skill and lack of pretention.

But he hasn't written a good play. The sad fact remains that while his speeches and personalities come briefly to life in the second act, the whole thing trails off into mediocrity in the last. I believe people will come to see him, as they should, for he is a commanding figure in our theatre today. But I regret that they won't see him doing something more rewarding.

For this he can blame nobody but Noel Coward.

The New York Times
November 15, 1957

Theatre: Coward's 'Nude With Violin'

Author Also Star of Belasco Comedy

By BROOKS ATKINSON

WELL, Noël Coward wrote it. Concluding a twenty-year absence from our stage, he is acting the chief part himself.

But "Nude With Violin," which opened at the Belasco last evening, lacks the vivacity of the work that is characteristic of him. Billed as a "light comedy," it is the story of a valet who has for years concealed the fact that his late master, a celebrated artist, was a fake.

•

When the curtain rises on a ravishing Paris studio, designed by Oliver Smith, an eager correspondent for Life is hysterically interviewing the valet about the artist, while the family is still at the funeral. Soon after they return, it becomes unmistakably certain that all the daring modern paintings that bear his signature and adorn the most glamorous museums were painted by other people.

Everyone has a sound reason to keep the hoax a secret. The family estate depends upon maintaining the fabulous prices paid by collectors everywhere. The reputation of his dealer is at stake.

•

Having established an ironic situation in the first of the three acts, Mr. Coward frugally varies it through the next two. Each of the people who actually did the paintings appears with certified letters that are blackmail. The joke is that none of them is a genuine painter—two girls who were his mistresses in succession, a Jamaican religious fanatic and finally—well, Mr. Coward is entitled to at least one secret.

But the plot is pretty much exhausted after the first act has run its course. Everything else is repetition. One is disposed to be respectful of any writer in English who says "in the circumstances" and not "under the circumstances," and who lards his English dialogue with phrases in French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Yiddish, unless he is pulling our legs with all the other languages as impudently as he does with the Chinese.

•

Mr. Coward is at least impeccable with the English language. But there is no avoiding the conclusion that the wit is limp and tarnished. Although the conversation runs briskly, the raillery is almost completely lacking in the crackle, spring and audacity that put Mr. Coward at the lead of the British comedy writers twenty and thirty years ago.

He plays the part of the valet — the unadmirable Crichton who knows how to deal with blackmailers because he one himself. A genial man-servant with a pompadour hair-do, a reserved, formal manner and a glib tongue, he presides over the follies of his comedy with the elegance of a trained domestic. But even here the clipped phrase seems a little slovenly. The cackling vocal style of twenty years ago, the meticulous design of the spoken sentence and the acid emphasis have succumbed to maturity and good nature. With the sting gone, there is not much exhilaration left.

The cast includes a number of agreeable actors in a mocking mood—Joyce Carey, Morris Carnovsky, Luba Malina, Angela Thornton, John Ainsworth, William Traylor, Mona Washbourne.

Since Mr. Coward wrote "Nude With Violin," let it pass for a comedy. But not for a comedy that is fresh, inventive and amusing. The old assurance has gone.

New York Post
November 15, 1957

TWO on the AISLE

By RICHARD WATTS Jr.

Mr. Coward Laughs at Modern Art

How would you like to have Noel Coward as your valet? Since the somewhat alarming possibilities of such a monstrous conception are considerably more fascinating than Mr. Coward's scornful ideas about modern art, and the role of a manservant overflowing with skulduggery is ideal for the eminent actor-author, his new comedy, "Nude With Violin," which opened last night at the Belasco Theater, is immensely entertaining. It isn't easy to say a great deal on behalf of the play as a satire on contemporary painting, but Mr. Coward makes it rare fun.

In truth, it is almost impossible, or at least fairly painful, to think of "Nude With Violin" without him. I know it has been a London success with other actors, including the brilliant John Gielgud, playing the role. Nevertheless, without having seen it there, I am still willing to go on record as believing dogmatically that people who saw "Nude With Violin" without Noel Coward didn't really see it. He is always far better than anyone else in the parts he writes, and his sly, relishing portrayal of the conniving valet shows him at his best.

Art Nitwits

Although this central character is the main thing, Mr. Coward is also concerned with showing his contempt for art faddists, and, to do so, he has fallen back on the oldest of all jokes at the expense of his target. This is, of course, that modern painting, so swooned over by cultural snobs, is actually the work of either conscious fakers, people who can't paint, or children, and that the most absurd of artistic abortions are hailed by critics and other pretentious nitwits. I doubt that he makes his case, but there is no reason for worrying about that.

At first, his play seems on the verge of resembling an old comedy by the late A. A. Milne called "The Truth About Blayds," which, however, was concerned with poets instead of painters. In the Milne fashion, he assembles the family of a famous artist who has just died, and then reveals the embarrassing fact that the fellow had never done any work of his own. He had just signed his name to the creations of others. In this case, though, the deceased wasn't merely a fraud. He was playing an elaborate joke on the pundits of the art world.

The Valet

Some of this is fun, because Mr. Coward can still write a shrewd comic line, and he knows how to bring on an entertaining procession of odd characters. But it would be in danger of growing perilously tedious if it weren't for Sebastien, the valet. This latest representative of a long line of wise and disreputable stage servants is in the great tradition of classic comedy, and the star plays him superbly. If only to see how he delights in the role, or to hear him speaking over the phone in French, Russian, Spanish, German, Chinese and Yiddish, would be a pleasure, but Mr. Coward's expertness makes him a joy.

The star is almost everything in "Nude With Violin," but there are some good performances in the lesser roles. Especially effective are Morris Carnovsky as an irate art dealer, Joyce Carey as the deceased's platitudinous widow, and Luba Malina as a Russian ex-mistress of the alleged painter. Angela Thornton is engaging as a sympathetic daughter, and there is a delightful portrayal by Iola Lynn in the small part of a pretty wife who roars at her husband's dismal jokes. This isn't one of his finest comedies, but Mr. Coward is at his incomparable best as a performer.

Daily Mirror

November 15, 1957

ROBERT COLEMAN'S THEATRE

'Nude With Violin' Is a Click!

Take a jigger of "The Truth About Blayds," add a dash of "The Late Christopher Bean" and season with copious shots of Noel Coward's cynical wit, and you'll have "Nude With Violin," which the Playwrights' Company—in association with Lance Hamilton and Charles Russell—brought to the Belasco Theatre Thursday evening.

For Coward is dealing with a famous painter who was a fraud. The fellow was lazy, sophisticated and prankish. The world was a joke to him, and he decided to play a big one on art dealers and critics. This he accomplished by selling as his own the works of others.

IT ALL CAME OUT after his demise, when his priggish family came to Paris to collect what they thought was a big fortune. Unfortunately, the wag had blown most of the proceeds from his salesmanship.

To make matters worse, a volatile Russian princess, a brassy music-hall dancer and a religious eccentric from Jamaica appeared with documents to prove that they had been responsible for the "masterpieces" of his three periods.

As if these weren't sufficient complications, the deceased's clever butler, who spoke 13 languages and had seen the inside of jails around the globe, announced that his high-living, late master had left the greatest picture of his career in a bank vault.

Well, we aren't going to tell you any more, for there should be some surprise left for those who will be seeing "Nude With Violin" over the next few months.

It is Coward's conclusion that it is often best to suppress the truth. Otherwise, people might begin to question the arts and the connoisseurs, with dubious results. After all, he argues, why not just take the pleasant things of life at face value, without probing into the mechanics of their production. Maybe he has a point there.

THE VERSATILE Coward, made up to look like the Sakini of "Teahouse of the August Moon," is quite amusing as the resourceful gentleman's gentleman. And, like that philosopher from Okinawa, he always has the right answers, though he arrives at them by unorthodox but eminently practical reasoning.

Luba Malina, as the temperamental Russian; Mona Washbourne, as the jaunty chorine; Cory Devlin, as the vocal Jamaican; and Morris Carnovsky, as a harassed art dealer, have bravura parts and act them with showy effect. Joyce Carey, Angela Thornton, Iola Lynn, John Ainsworth and Bobby Alford also make helpful contributions.

The smartest audience of the season braved a driving rain to attend the American premiere of the smartest comedy of the season. The first-nighters were rewarded for their courage with bright and brittle humor, loads of laughs and a devastatingly suave performance by author-actor-director Coward. "Nude With Violin" spells hilarity as slick as a seal's overcoat.

The Playwrights' Company has another hit to match its "Time Remembered." Score two clicks in a row, in a single week, for that organization, which seems to be specializing in caviar for the general.

"Time Remembered"

The New York Times

November 13, 1957

Theatre: Ideal Blend

By BROOKS ATKINSON

EVERYTHING is just about ideal in "Time Remembered," which opened at the Morosco last evening.

Script, actors, direction, decor—one might also add audience: they blend into a thing of delight. The script is by Jean Anouilh, whose "Waltz of the Toreadors" dropped a little acid into last season, "Time Remembered" is a more wistful fairy-story in a kinder mood.

It is the story of a rich young man who is obsessed with the memory of a girl, now dead, whom he loved a couple of years ago. To break the spell, his aunt, the Duchess of Pont-au-Bronc, hires a charming milliner to impersonate the dead girl and relieve her nephew's lonely preoccupation.

•

It is romance in an old-fashioned vein with this difference: M. Anouilh is a skeptic with a mind that disciplines his emotion. And the charm of "Time Remembered" is not the course of true love in the familiar fashion but the sharpness of the writing, the madness of the story, the comic distortion of the characters, the cutting wit of the side-remarks, the droll balance between unreality and reality.

Like a realist, M. Anouilh shatters the nephew's preoccupation with past time and illusions. His story gets closer and closer to the absurd and ludicrous. Finally he destroys the dream and lets in the sunlight. For he is a writer of comedy, a wit and an iconoclast and a wonderfully civilized poet of the theatre.

•

So are his collaborators. Performance and production radiate intelligence. Oliver Smith's rococo settings of a chateau and a private park are overladen to the point of bathos, and Miles White's elaborate costumes are amusingly grandiose. Everything has been designed in a style of subtle hyperbole.

In his direction, Albert Marre has ingeniously combined loveliness and drollery, piling magnificence so high that it becomes funny. As the mad duchess, Helen Hayes gives a glorious performance in a vein of Alice-in-Wonderland humor. The acting is fresh and joyous. The tossing of the head, the merry eyes, the comic changes of pace, the glints and glances compose a fabulous characterization that is vastly entertaining in a style of high comedy. To the skill of a mature actress she brings the lightness of an alert mind and the taste of a fine artist.

As the milliner hired to impersonate a dream, Susan Strasberg is entrancing also. In her slender youth she looks like a delicate cameo, but she, too, brings some intelligence to the part, seasoning the romance with a dash of unbelief. Richard Burton plays the bemused suitor as if it were part of a masquerade. It is elegant and a little stuffy, on the surface, but a little ridiculous, too, for Mr. Burton never forgets that the author's tongue is in the cheek.

The secondary parts are expertly done. Glenn Anders' fumbling and bumbling as Lord Hector is very funny; and Sig Arno's little snobberies as a headwaiter are comic, too. Everyone is caught up in a mood of ludicrous make-believe.

For "Time Remembered" is all mood, despite the elaborate fable M. Anouilh is telling. The comedian takes away what the romancer proposes. M. Anouilh is a hard-headed modernist, and the actors have sensed the amusing difference between what he says and what he believes. It is gorgeous theatre all the way through, everything and everyone being just about ideal.

"TIME REMEMBERED"

Comedy in two acts and five scenes by Jean Anouilh, English version by Patricia Moyes; staged by Albert Marre; designed by Oliver Smith; costumes by Miles White; lighting by Feder; presented by the Playwrights Company in association with Milton Sperling at the Morosco Theatre, November 12, 1957. The cast:

Amanda	Susan Strasberg
Duchess of Pont-Au-Bronc	Helen Hayes
Theophilus	Frederick Rolf
Lord Hector	Glenn Anders
Ice Cream Man	Le Roi Operti
Taxi Driver	George Ebeling
Prince Albert	Richard Burton
Ferdinand	Sig Arno
Singer	Stanley Grover
Pianist	Edmund Horn
Violinist	Seymour Miroff
Cellist	Emil Borsody
Landlord	Frederic Warringer
Germain	Truman Gaige

New York Post

November 13, 1957

TWO on the AISLE

By RICHARD WATTS Jr.

A Romantic Comedy of Vast Charm

The famous romantic irony of Jean Anouilh is more fragile than usual in "Time Remembered." Presented without notable style or bravura deftness, it might even seem too mild a comedy to be satisfying. But, since the production which opened last night at the Morosco Theater, in Patricia Moyes' excellent English adaptation, is particularly rich in the required qualities, and Helen Hayes is giving her finest recent performance in one of its leading roles, it proves to be delightfully playful entertainment in the best sophisticated fairy-tale fashion.

There is something of the unashamed Cinderella fable in M. Anouilh's narrative. A dashing young French nobleman has been brooding morosely over his late sweetheart, whom he had loved for but three days, and his devoted aunt, a charming and somewhat scatterbrained old lady, brings to him an innocent little milliner, who more or less resembles the lost dream girl, hoping to make him forget his rather elaborate sadness. It is giving away no secret to add that there is a happy ending. That is the kind of story "Time Remembered" proudly is.

The Romantic

Naturally, though, M. Anouilh has his own observations to make on the subject. As an intelligently ironic romanticist, who is here not too disturbed by his share of disillusion, he knows that it is less his lost love than the realization that he is forgetting her, that he may not really have loved her at all, which upsets the true romantic. It is the resentment caused by this melancholy discovery which keeps the young man of the play from appreciating the new girl, and his fight against accepting the truth is what gives the story the substance it possesses.

But playful fancy rather than dramatic substance is the chief charm of "Time Remembered," and it is happily equipped in this respect. Much of this is due to the Anouilh inventiveness, which includes the fantastic world of the splendid old dowager and another world of night clubs, little inns, and other memories of the past which she has created for the lovelorn youth. All of this is most engagingly managed and is winningly mixed with the observations on romanticism. Yet it might have been wasted without the grace and charm of the playing.

The Players

It would, in truth, be difficult to imagine a romantic comedy more delightfully acted. Miss Hayes' portrayal of the sweet and mildly dotty aunt is a gem of beguiling humor, gentle and gallant, but still salty and gaily scornful when necessary. Young Susan Strasberg demonstrates that her excellence as Anne Frank was no mere stroke of luck by playing the little milliner with grace, dexterity, humor and warm romantic charm. It is a lovely performance. And Richard Burton is admirable as the sad young man, giving him spirit, substance and vitality.

The lesser roles are likewise engagingly played, particularly by Glenn Anders, as the old lady's fumbling and wildly ineffectual brother, and Sig Arno, as a long-suffering head waiter. Albert Marre's staging has given the production pace and vitality as well as style, while Oliver Smith's imaginative sets, Miles White's attractive costumes, and the incidental music composed by Vernon Duke capture the comedy's playful mood brilliantly. Done with such deftness in all its aspects, "Time Remembered" provides a winning theatrical evening.

New York Herald Tribune

November 13, 1957

FIRST NIGHT REPORT

WALTER KERR'S REVIEW

'Time Remembered'

QUITE a bit of the time in "Time Remembered" is taken up trying to analyze the charm of a lovely, scatterbrained, orchid-eating lunatic who died only three days after our dashing young hero had met her but whose spell lingered on for years and years. I don't know whether the spell of M. Anouilh's jewel-box of a play is going to last me that long, but I feel comfortably certain we'll be savoring its graces when this season draws to a close.

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The slice of angel-food cake that is being served up at the Morosco is graciously written, gloatingly performed, and—on practically every count you can think of—just grand.

The ingredients? Helen Hayes to stomp into a bright, bronzed powder-box of a living room, delicately scratch her magnificently silvered hair, and shuffle the lives of two stubbornly independent lovers like a pack of gaudy playing cards.

Miss Hayes can, of course, do anything—but it turns out that there are a few things she hasn't bothered to show us until now. Her version of a fairish part of "Swan Lake," for instance. It's fascinating, unexpected tilts and all. And there's the business of telling us how she held a would-be suicide's coattails for an hour while he tried to jump off a balcony, the business of trying to walk into a cafe like a sleepy-eyed and demented Borzoi hound, the business of recalling a painter's brush-strokes with her tongue tucked fiercely in one corner of her mouth. Whatever Miss Hayes gives us, it's the business.

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But listen to her, if you please, tuck all of the bright, boozy, beguiling farce inflections stealthily away as the "violet velvet of evening" descends, lower her voice to a yearning whisper, and speak with soft, seductive passion of the daughter she never had and the love that another generation might very well look for. The actress talks almost without interruption through a twilight garden scene, and I found myself hoping that the lines would never run out.

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Enough of the lady. Richard Burton is on hand to take over the second act, to stammer in outrage and recoil into brooding silence as a substitute love is offered him to ease his romantic pain. Mr. Burton's silences, while he plays a black-cloaked Mr. Rochester at odds with an empty world, are alive with promise. The promise is perfectly fulfilled, in what amounts to a climactic aria, when Mr. Burton rises from his champagne to outline—in comic and caustic splendor—the boredom of the rich, the handsome, and the relatively untalented. The precision and power with which he spits out a crackling set-piece are superb.

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Susan Strasberg, ravishing to look at as the "tiny pink and white ogre" who is sent to shatter a man's melancholy, has stunning moments. Miss Strasberg's voice is not yet flexible enough to keep perfect company with the formidable competition, but when she is just drawing in her breath and turning her head away at a startling suggestion, or pretending to be another woman and making a slight mistake, she is winning indeed.

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"Time Remembered" is a fragile piece of theatrical chinaware, and there are vagrant times when tiny cracks begin to appear. It takes awhile for the opening sequence to establish that brittle, faintly disbalanced universe in which, as Miss Hayes remarks, "art is stronger than nature." Oliver Smith's otherwise enchanting settings, including a forest of dancing trees, do provide the players with one bleak hurdle: a flight of steps no one can gracefully manage. Here and there archness threatens, though never seriously and never for long.

But I think, in the circumstances, you'll be bound to forgive everything, because M. Anouilh does. Not only does he have players Sig Arno, Le Roi Operti, Glenn Anders, and Frederic Warriner to help out the principals, and a thoroughly attractive Vernon Duke underscoring to whisk them along, he has his own wry, wise, and curiously kindly private resources to chain us to his ingratiating conceit. The mood is mellow, the colors are autumnally gay, and the wit is wonderfully gentle.

Daily Mirror

November 13, 1957

ROBERT COLEMAN'S THEATRE

'Time Remembered' Is Fun

"Time Remembered" starts out as though it were going to be a dramatic shell game after the manner of Pirandello, then switches into the fantastical mood of Jean Giraudoux, and finally ends up being a romantic comedy by Jean Anouilh. At first we were wondering who was crazy and what was real, and eventually discovered that it was all on the level.

Anouilh is telling of a wealthy French artistocrat nursing memories of three days spent with a lunatic and wonderfully witty ballerina who strangled herself with a scarf to achieve a big, theatrical moment. His devoted aunt and uncle have set up replicas on the family estate of the spots in which the couple had been so happy.

TO NO AVAIL, for something is missing. A girl, of course. She is found in the person of a young milliner, with an amazing physical resemblance to the ill-fated dancer. The only trouble is that she is eminently practical, where the original had been as mad as a March hare.

There is a delightfully humorous and revealing scene in a prop nightclub, which duplicates the atmosphere of a Viennese cafe where the Prince had been fascinated by the weired coryphee. The melancholy Albert describes the terrors of boredom, boredom to which young men of his station are inevitably doomed.

You must have suspected by now that a live and lovely peasant proves more att active than a dead, flamboyant dream. So Albert's doting aunt and uncle shed a fleeting tear for the departed, as they rejoice at his return to the present, forsaking memories for the real thing.

"Time Remembered" is episodic as an iridescent soap bubble, but it has many charming and delightful moments. Particularly when such ingratiating people as Helen Hayes, Richard Burton and Susan Strasberg have been enlisted to display its virtues at their shimmering best.

Miss Hayes is nothing less than irresistible as a pixie duchess, who could have stepped from the pages of a W. S. Gilbert script. She brings heart, warmth, and capriciousness to the jaunty and eccentric grande dame. Glenn Anders is winningly droll as her conspirator in banishing morbidity from the Chateau Pont-au-Bronc.

RICHARD BURTON is quite believable as the neurotic recluse captivated by the amateur actress with a will of her own. Miss Strasberg fairly glows as the milliner who will take just so much nonsense, even from a man with whom she's fallen in love. Their moving miming lights up the second act like showers of sparks from a holiday Roman candle.

Sig Arno is quite amusing as a patient, though often frustrated, head waiter, engaged to run a phony bistro. Frederick Rolf, Le Roi Operti, George Ebeling, Frederic Warriner and Truman Gaige also stand out in other roles.

Oliver Smith and Miles White have designed sets and costumes that catch the flavor of the serio-comic romp. Vernon Duke has composed an incidental score that falls pleasantly on the ears. And Albert Marre, whose idea it was to present the piece over here in association with the Playwrights' Company, has staged it with fitting tongue-in-cheek.

"Time Remembered" should make the Morosco a Mecca for the carriage trade over the next few months.

Journal American

November 13, 1957

Starts Slowly—but Has Much Charm

By JOHN McCLAIN

"TIME REMEMBERED," presented at the Morosco Theatre last night by the Playwrights' Company and Milton Sperling, is a slow-starting fantasy which builds to an evening of considerable charm and humor. This Jean Anouilh adaptation by Patricia Moyes has several pronounced assets: it has the services of Helen Hayes and Susan Strasberg and an engaging young Britisher named Richard Burton. It also has that intangible which, in the absence of a longer definition, is called "style."

On the debit side of the ledger, however, it must be granted that the play meanders much of the time, that the author's consideration of the fruits of memory becomes endlessly oblique, and that nothing of any importance emerges in the end.

There will be varying interpretations of what M. Anouilh set out to prove, but from this pew I gathered he was telling us that everything looks better in retrospect, but we are suckers not to live in the present.

A rich and indulgent Duchess in France has the conceit to recreate the setting and the situations in which her favored nephew had a momentous romance with a young lady who met an untimely death at the peak of the affair. Susan Strasberg, a milliner's employe, is imported from Paris to be the reincarnate lady fair. Her battle with Richard Burton's memory of his lost love is futile — until . . .

The key to what is to happen is delivered early in the proceedings, but there are interminable moments of philosophy in the interim and a great deal of sheer padding, much of it quite humorous, involving Miss Hayes as the fey Duchess and Glenn Anders as Lord Hector, her companion.

The star is given an opportunity to dance hither and yon, to engage in some very realistic bird shooting, and to deliver herself of lengthy passages on the subjects of love and life. She is, however, generally incidental to the main thread of the story.

Miss Strasberg, who has grown into delectable young womanhood from the scrawny days of "The Diary of Anne Frank," gives an appealing performance, but I have serious doubts about her voice. I suppose it has something to do with projection, but it sounded labored and unreal to me.

The part taken by Richard Burton was, I thought, mostly preposterous. Yet he has vast charm and good looks, and he succeeds finally, after a series of implausible scenes, in bringing some sympathy and interest to the romance.

The truly hilarious moments are supplied by Sig Arno, as a beleaguered head waiter, and by Glenn Anders, as the luxurious Lordship.

Oliver Smith has designed a workable ingenious group of sets for the Chateau and its environs, and Vernon Duke has composed some incidental music which, if given better presentation, would be a solid feature of the evening.

Albert Marre has done well in directing this discoursive property. I believe "Time Remembered" will be a mild winner, due to its stars and the immaculate mounting it's been given, but it certainly is not the socko-success the season has been waiting for.